

Greetings Representative Horn, Representative Osten, & Members of the Public Safety and Security Committee,

My name is Tae Ward, a current resident in Willimantic, and an MSW candidate at the UConn School of Social Work. I am testifying in support of SB 217.

As a member of the LGBTQ community, I want to be assured that there are resources and support for myself, my friends, and my family. I believe that this bill is a step in the right direction for the protection of LGBTQ individuals, especially our transgender community. Hate crime incidents caused by gender identity bias increased by nearly 20% for the second year in a row, according to The Uniform Crime Reporting Program's Hate Crime Statistics 2020 report. Violence against transgender people in the United States, particularly transgender women of color, is on the rise. Our community needs comprehensive data collection related to sexual orientation and gender identity in order to assist in the development of better legislative solutions to address the rising fatal violence against Black trans women and hate crimes against all LGBTQ people.

When it comes to identifying and responding to hate crimes, law enforcement organizations play a key role and hold a major responsibility to the community and

victims. Establishing a hate crime unit within the Connecticut State Police will help centralize resources and expertise, ensuring that data and best practices are shared statewide – and that Connecticut law enforcement is prepared to respond to these increasing threats. In the fight against hate crimes and discrimination, we need law enforcement officers who are dedicated, knowledgeable about hate crimes, and victim-focused.

Thank you everyone for your time.

Tae Ward